

3.12.2009
Senate Agricultural Committee
Oppose Bill HB 418
Kathy Luedtke

SENATE AGRICULTURE
EXHIBIT NO. 19
DATE 3-12-09
BILL NO. HB 418

My testimony comes not only from the heart, but from the head, as well. I have spent countless hours researching data before coming to my final position on HB 418.

Initially, I was on the fence with regards to my position on this bill. Never, in my wildest dreams, did I have a plan to be here before this committee today with testimony of any kind. It was only after I uncovered so much disturbing evidence, on how in-humane this process is for the Horse, that I knew I needed to at least make an attempt to prevent the passage of this bill today.

My thoughts initially, prior to research;

- "Surely, it would be more *Humane* to have *Regulated Humane Slaughter* in this country rather than ship long distances to unregulated plants in Mexico or Canada?"

What I found:

Overwhelming amounts of proven documented data showing, that in the past, we were not able to get a handle on a *Humane* process of slaughtering a horse.....no part of it was, or ever will be *Humane*.

Not the feed lots. Not the transport. Not the method of final kill.

I could find no data showing any part of it to be *Humane*.

- "Surely, it would be more *Humane* to slaughter a horse quickly than abandon it to starve in the wild?" "What else would we do with all the unwanted horses?"

What I found:

No proven documents or reports, by the agencies in charge of abandoned horses across the State, to prove that there is even an issue with abandoned horses starving in the wilds.

"All what unwanted horses?"

There are an abundance of options available for those responsible horse owners that do find they are no longer able to care for a horse. There are even euthanasia and hay grants for those experiencing financial hardship. In this great state...we still have neighbors helping neighbors. Not only are there structured non-profit sanctuaries across the state, but we also have very informal networks in place to assist those that need to place a horse that no longer has a home.

I could provide you with horrific photos documenting everything but Humane Care from the Feed Lot, Transport, and the Final Kill. I'm guessing, you've probably seen it all already. If you need to see it ...let me know.

My testimony is simple in its content. I am a meat loving, gun owning, hunting, fishing, leather, and hide wearing, Montana girl.

I have raised my kids to treat the world with the same respect and dignity that they would hope to have extended to them by this world.

I am proud to know that they will pass, this simple "Montana Legacy", on to their children.

It is only my opinion; no part of Horse Slaughter exhibits any level of respect to an animal that we have domesticated, gained it's trust, and used as our partner in recreation and work.

With much respect,

Please consider my testimony and Oppose HB 418.

Respectfully,

Kathy Luedtke

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I have attached some photos.
The first is of a single horse.
The second is a series of four photos.

The first horse is from a local animal cruelty case in Ravalli County where two private citizens (through a jury trial) are now facing, serving a year in jail.

In this case four horses were seized by local sheriffs.
In sentencing, Judge Bailey stated " the horses were not only neglected but tortured, as well"

The second series of photos are taken directly from a USDA report.

The photographs were taken between January 17, 2005 and November 17, 2005 at Beltex, the Belgian owned plant in Fort Worth, Texas. Beltex was forced to close this plant in 2007, after courts upheld Texas law that has banned horse slaughter since 1949. Beltex has since focused on its operations in Fresnillo, Mexico where it continues to slaughter American horses. In addition, Beltex still runs the second largest slaughter horse feedlot in the U.S. Horses from all over the country are transported to the feedlot in Morton, TX before being sent to the Beltex slaughter plant in Mexico.

Photographs from the United States Department of Agriculture taken during 2005 at the Beltex horse slaughter plant in Texas. Hundreds of photographs graphically show horses with open fractures, legs missing, battered and bloody faces, eyeballs dangling and what appears to be horses left bleeding to death. The document provides unimpeachable evidence for the immediate ban on the slaughter of American horses.

My point:

We sentence 2 private citizen's to a year in jail for treatment of a horse, resulting in the image of the first horse photographed.

We are entertaining passing a bill that will allow an industry, that for the horse, will have the end result of the images in the series of the four horses.

Am I missing something here?

I am happy to have further dialogue with anyone who wishes to clarify how we can justify these two scenarios under the same state laws

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Two private citizens facing 1 yr in jail each
for torturing this horse.

Horse left on trail 8-1-2008

Ravalli County



USDA Photos 2005 Texas
Beltex Horse Slaughter Plant